

DISJOINT

Thirteen Short Works of Fiction & Poetry

Basil Munroe Godevenos

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This collection is dedicated to my family, who always believed I could do anything I set my mind to.



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Prophecy

At the bottom of the busiest escalator in the Garden Hill subway station crouches a man. His face is washed by a desperate grin; the kind one usually sees under tear-filled, half-frightened eyes. He waves a cup at descending travellers, struggling to meet the fleeing gaze of each passer-by. Sometimes the cup is paper, sometimes it is polystyrene. It is always battered and abused, like its wielder, and rarely holds more than a few pennies, perhaps a nickel.

At the top of that same escalator stood Gregory Merchant, who had just finished hanging up his phone, looking at his wristwatch and letting out a great, exasperated groan. He had in his thin, light brown valise a disc containing a presentation he had just learned he was not late for but which had in fact been rescheduled to three hours hence. He had rushed from the airport in an expensive cab whose driver had never heard of Cook and James and refused to take him farther than Cook at Garden Hill. The shortness of Merchant's time, the apprehension of the pending meeting, and the insolence of the cabbie had

all contributed to the pulsing, puke-green ball of anxiety lodged in his gut, just below his left kidney. And now all that stress had nowhere to go. For three hours it would sit there and grow, like a malignant tumour it would eat away at his insides until it came to his well-rehearsed, cool, collected façade. If his composure broke before he walked out of that conference room, if he made one slip in his body language or stuttered even a little, all was lost. He needed something to distract him from it. He started back towards the exit to the street then remembered where he was. Garden Hill. He recalled watching the 20-room mansions float by outside the cab window. He did not remember seeing a single shop or coffeehouse or bookstore that might serve his purpose of diversion.

Gregory Merchant was not a religious man, but he had a somewhat more than nominal belief in karma. That is why when he resolved that he should get himself as close to James Street on Cook as he could so as not to run any risk of being late when the time of the meeting came, when he stepped onto the escalator to go down to the train, when he saw the silently whimpering eyes of the panhandler at the bottom looking into his, pleading for something, anything at all, Gregory Merchant sent a mental thank-you card to chance or providence or Vishnu or that all-encompassing universal oneness to which he suddenly felt more connected. Here, wrapped up in this destitute, pathetic human being was an opportunity to make some good luck for himself and keep himself occupied for at least a little while.

Merchant's eyes were locked in the stare of the little, scraggly beggar for the whole ride down. The man seemed so desperate, so needy. Merchant began to have second thoughts. What could he possibly do to help this man? He couldn't give him any meaningful sum of money, Merchant himself was going to ask for money in three hours' time. Would a cup of coffee or a meal make that much difference? Who knows when he ate last, or if he would ever eat again? If he died tomorrow, what difference would it make? But there was too much at stake, Merchant needed a distraction. The hope of people like this man rested on his performance that afternoon.

That was it! A meal alone might not make an impact, but a message of hope would! He could keep this man's body alive for one more day and, more importantly, keep his spirit alive for as long as the hope he offered lasted.

The bottom. "Can I buy you a cup of coffee, maybe some lunch?" The little,

scrawny man recoiled slightly from the shock of being spoken to. "Sorry, I didn't mean to alarm you, I just wondered if you were hungry or could use some company." The desperate grin became a touch less desperate and the frightened eyes moistened slightly. The little tramp nodded vigorously.

Merchant smiled and led the man onto a westbound train. They sat together, prince and pauper, slim leather-soled loafers and old, bare-toe-betraying sneakers, fine tailored suit purchased for the meeting on a small loan (a good investment) and rags. Merchant was painfully aware of the reaction of others in the car to his companion. A shiver of movement passed through the riders as each one made an infinitesimal shift away from them. The shiver was accompanied by a wave of curious looks shot at Merchant. Why was he not behaving as the others were? Surely such a well groomed man felt the same disdain for the likes of this derelict as everyone else did. Merchant levelled eyes with as many as he could and each one looked guiltily in another direction, ashamed, not of their own prejudices, but that one of their own would betray them.

When Merchant turned his attention back to his distraction, he noticed that the man was uncomfortable. He squirmed in his seat, looking around at the other passengers, who avoided his gaze, but sneaked glances at him when they thought he was looking the other way. No doubt he felt the full force of his ostracism. "I'm Greg," ventured Merchant. But the man only smiled and nodded, not really giving any indication that he had even understood anything beyond the fact that Merchant was talking to him. "Do you have a name?" The beggar still said nothing; he only nodded another grinning affirmative. "What is it?" The incorrigible little man just went on grinning.

Merchant let out a frustrated blast of air. "Very well, I'll call you John," he said in a tone that resonated with parental finality.

A twinkle of the eye joined the grin on the tramp's face. "John." He broke his silence with his new name. Pleased with the sound of it, his smile spread wider. "John." He said it again. Each time, he appeared to prepare the sound with great care before he let it out of his mouth in a short burst, as though he was struggling to overcome a stutter. John looked around the car and proclaimed his name to the passengers several times more. Merchant assumed he was an idiot, or at least psychologically unbalanced. Oh well, it would make for a better distraction.

John eventually fell back into grinning silence and presently the train squealed

to a halt at Jordan Station, the closest subway exit to James Street according to the city map Merchant had picked up at the fare kiosk. They disembarked the train and ascended to the street.

“Well John—”

“John.” Interjected John, gleefully.

Merchant smiled a tight, patient smile. “What would you like for lunch today?”

The happy vagrant looked around, eyes shaded by his hand, in mock explorer style. Giving a start, he mimed an “aha” and pointed furtively in the direction of a cafeteria style bakery and soup diner.

“Good choice, John. Certainly better than I would have made.”

Ordering lunch was a difficult procedure for John, whose vocabulary thus far was “John”, but he somehow managed to communicate that he wanted a cup of coffee and a rich chicken and vegetable soup that came served in a bowl made of bread that you were meant to eat once the soup was gone. Merchant ordered a simple meal of cappuccino and butter croissant, not wanting to feed the ball of stress in his gut.

After watching him devour his soup along with its bowl pausing only to take air into his lungs and expel it from his stomach and bowels, Merchant decided that it was time to unveil his ray of hope to John, although he did not have an enormous amount of confidence in John’s ability to appreciate it. “What do you think about the government, John?”

“John?”

“The government; the people who run the country, decide what the money gets spent on, where the resources go.”

John’s lips turned down at the corners and a dark look crossed his eyes. It seemed as though he wasn’t an idiot after all. His sanity, however, was still in question.

“Greedy, aren’t they?” Merchant led John’s thoughts with his words, “But it isn’t their fault, really. It’s human nature to be power-hungry and greedy. The problem isn’t that the wrong people are in charge, it’s that any person is in charge at all.” He was reaching John; he could see it in his eyes. “What if people didn’t run the country at all? What if something that wasn’t greedy and power hungry was in charge, something that was naturally inclined to consider all people equally

deserving of the necessities of life? Then maybe the wealth of the nation would be shared by the nation and everyone would get a chance to make a positive difference in his or her own way!”

“John!”

“In an hour, I’m going to meet with the Minister of Natural Resources and his appointed committee. I’ve come up with a way to make a machine think like a human being, John.”

“John?” said John, in disbelief.

“It’s true! Just think of it. The machine would be able to understand human needs and it would be intelligent enough to make all the big decisions. It would treat us all with equal value, and make sure everyone got what he needed. I just need some time and money to make it happen.” Merchant beamed, “John, this could save the world.”

John looked a little skeptical, and said nothing.

“Well, listen,” continued Merchant, somewhat dismayed at the fact that his bit of hope didn’t catch, “I have to go get ready for this meeting. If you’re interested in how it went, you can call me or write or whatever. Do you want me to leave you my card?”

“John,” said John, nodding and smiling reassuringly.

Merchant reached into his coat and brought out a small leather card wallet that matched his valise (someone on that committee would notice if it didn’t). He opened it and carefully extracted a freshly printed business card. *Gregory Merchant, Artificial Intelligence Research and Development*, it stated in a bold copperplate. He held the card delicately between his index and middle fingers, extending it for John to take, practicing for the meeting. John reached out to take it and for a moment, for one tiny fraction of time, they held the card together. In that instant, Merchant felt something, a sudden gain and loss of something, like something intangible rushed through his body and passed from his fingers into the card. But it was only a moment, only a split-second and he didn’t have time to really notice it.

“Keep in touch, John.” Merchant withdrew his hand and picked up his effects. John stood, card in outstretched hand, saying nothing.

Out in the street, Merchant paused a moment to get his bearings, then began walking in the direction of James Street.

“Gregory Merchant.”

Merchant stopped in mid-step. He was not used to hearing his name from such a commanding voice.

“Gregory Merchant, turn and face me,” ordered the voice. The slightly frightened researcher turned slowly, and there was John, John the beggar, standing tall in the street pointing at Merchant with Merchant’s own business card. The now stately pauper began to advance toward Merchant at a run and before he could react, Merchant felt cold steel pierce his stomach. The ball of stress shattered, none of that mattered now. John brought his other arm around Merchant’s back, holding him and gently lowering him to the ground. And John spoke into Greg’s dying ear.

“And woe, a merchant shall come to you, bearing a false gift. It shall be a gift that claims salvation and it shall seem a good thing in the eyes of men. But it is a gift born of pride. Pride that will not save but will enslave all mankind. Look to the merchant’s coming and fear him above all others.”

And Gregory Merchant died that day on Cook Street, in a strange city, murdered by a strange man.

And John Doe the beggar, John Doe the murderer, John Doe the prophet lived out the rest of his life in an institution, all his needs fulfilled.

👁️ end 👁️

Catechism for the Mad

The appearance of virtue often shrouds
The true nature of a soul.
Who knows of what evil I speak when I'm alone?
What vile and hateful dialogue
Passes through the recesses of my mind?
What foul cadence is sung
Into the pitch of my sanctus sanctorum
In the witching hours before daylight?
Where eyes do not see
And ears are deafened by thick walls,
What horrid acts are done by my hands?
What are my dreams?
What drama unfolds
In the dusty, windblown boneyard of my unconscious?

Where the skeletons of my past are laid to rest,
And from whence they rise to haunt my nights with terror and guilt.

Can you name the shrieking spirits of my madness?
Can you cast my demons out?
I am a slave to their ejaculations of blasphemy.

What manner of thing is man?
Through what filter do I see him?
He is putrid and disgusting to me,
A boiled mass of sinful flesh.
Let him be seared by the burning light,
I am safe in the cool, damp darkness.
I rise over a despairing world
And exact justice on its wicked.
I am a god in my own right,
And will rule the world I create with my bloodstained hands.

Will it love me, or curse me?

Duplicity

I see a man. He is average; normal in every way. He is neither short nor tall, but precisely five feet, seven and a half inches. His hair is light brown and straight; his eyes are dull brown. His face is bland; his nose and teeth slightly crooked, but not quite crooked enough to call attention to themselves. I see a man. There is nothing remarkable about him. He is tired, lonely, and he lacks drive. He sees no purpose in his life; no beauty. I see a man. He does not live, he merely exists. I look in the mirror.

I see a man. He is unique; exceptional in every way. He is five feet, seven and a half inches tall, an ideal height. His hair is golden brown and styled boldly; his chestnut eyes shine when the light catches them. His face is bright and warm; his features striking. I see a man. He is remarkable. He is vigorous, content, and driven. He has a purpose; he sees beauty where most see nothing. I see a man. He does not merely exist, he lives. I look in the mirror.

In the Kitchen

I looked at you
With pangs of hunger in my heart.
Longing for forbidden food I'd tasted once before.
I pored over the pages of your face,
But I'd forgotten how to read the writing;
The meanings were a jumble in my mind.

Then, a touch.
Suppressed hope.
Try not to dream.

Now I see you,
Fear set aside,
And the pages come to life.

I see the stars in my eyes
Reflected in the golden rings of yours.
The world seems so far away in this moment,
But the whole thing is at our fingertips.
Anticipation is nine tenths of happiness,
And in us,
There is so much to look forward to.

Pinions on Air

We are feathers
Blowing in the wind;
We travel a path
Set out by fate.
Our feathers, for a time
Are caught in the same light zephyr.
They dance
Sometimes touching,
Circling each other.
If they should part
They will always remember that dance.

A Short Study on Decay

I wake up to darkness. It is a darkness so complete that movement is impossible, fear of what fills the dark prevents it. It is damp here and the air is close, yet not stale. Instead there is a richness to it, a fullness, as if it is a parasite feeding on some bountiful host and becoming fat. There is something about the way it moves. There is no breeze, and yet the air oozes over me, it slides along the surface of my skin, wetly caressing me. And cold. There is so much cold. Everything is cold here, as if it has always been cold and never known warmth.

I begin to wonder what place I am in. It is a void. A void full to bursting with an emptiness I can taste. I know that I haven't always been here but I have no memory of any other place. How did I come to be here? I don't know. How long have I been here? It has been hours since I woke up, or days, or years. There is no way to tell. It feels the way eternity ought to feel, no beginning in memory and no end in sight.

At last, a change. Time has been passing after all. It is the air. It grows denser and more humid. Now, instead of passing over me smoothly, there is pressure. It

is a weight, holding me in place. Oppressive. Its odour changes. It is mild at first, like wild mushrooms growing in a secluded grotto, but it quickly intensifies. The smell becomes repulsive, and I cannot get away from it. I am suffocated by the heavy stench.

As the air grows more vile, so does the temperature increase. I don't know the source of the heat. It touches every part of me at once, even my insides. I begin to guess at the origin of the smell and the heat. In terror I imagine that my void is really the lair of some horrible, blind beast, creeping ever closer to me, feeling its way to its helplessly inert prey.

At once I'm aware of a sickening sensation. Tendrils slither across my skin and, horror, through it.

The worms blindly gorge themselves on the ripe, rotten feast of my flesh as I lay in my grave. My meat is eaten and my bones ebb away to dust. But my mind remains.

No rest, no peace.

Comedian

the last laugh is always bitter.
the tangy air around the microphone suddenly tastes stale.
beads of perspiration.
tepid water soothes a hoarse throat.
footsteps.
the roar of applause moves farther and farther away.
shady, shapeless faces
ring out praises:
“you killed out there”
towel.
“way to knock ‘em dead”
fresh shirt.
“I laughed my ass off”
bourbon.

sycophants.
liquid fire down the throat,
still hoarse.
searing pain eternal
deadened.
but it will come back.
the pain always comes back.

the backseat of the cab smells like alcohol poisoning and
old
sweaty
sex.
the music of the street blares.
engines growl, horns honk, people laugh and shout.
it is the heartbeat of a dead city.

cocaine.

penthouse apartment
with slate floors, a concrete ceiling
frosted glass and stainless steel.
so cold.
so empty.
empty walls and
empty table tops
filled with vacant memories.

little red pill.

the city is dead.

little red pill.

the cabbie was dead.

little red pill.

mama and papa are dead.

little red pill.

the laughter is dead.

little red --

The Truth About the Reaper

Deep, deep in the bowels of the Earth
(Which, contrary to popular belief, are deathly cold)
There is a little room.

In it is a small desk with an uncomfortable metal chair.
Lit only by a single tube of fluorescent light,
It is home to a man.

He is dressed in gray pants and dusty white shirtsleeves.
Thick eyeglasses rest on his nose, his necktie is thin.
His shoes give him blisters.

His skin is extremely pale and it sags at his eyes.
He is short, overweight and his hairline is grossly receded,

He doesn't know his age.

He has no memory of open air or the sun.

He does not know what it is like to have loved ones,

He thinks he's never had any.

He has but one purpose in life, his reason for being.

His beady eyes dart over lists of names that include yours and mine.

He is choosing those who will die today.

Despite the cold, he sweats at the effort.

Coffee

1: She

I didn't notice him enter the coffee-shop, but I was vaguely aware of a new body in the room. I was sitting by myself in an alcove of couches, reading the latest campus newspaper, (dreams of a tuition freeze was this issue's hot topic). Suddenly, he was standing in my alcove. I threw a brief, appraising glance at this newcomer. He wasn't worth a second one.

Returning to my reading I heard him sit down with an enormous sigh. I resisted the urge to let my eyes seek the source of the sound. Trying desperately to engross myself in an article advocating a student's union, I heard him shift loudly in his seat several times. Was he trying to draw attention to himself? Finally he stopped making noise. I could enjoy my reading now in peace. I took a celebratory sip of cappuccino and settled back into the plush cushions with a small sigh of relief.

“Did you read the exposé on the school’s budget?” His loud voice pulled me from my brief reverie and my eyes, being temporarily disoriented, focused on his face.

I had no choice, “Pardon?”

“The exposé on the budget in that paper, have you read it?”

I had no desire for a conversation with someone who, despite how little he’d said, had already proven himself to be so obnoxious, so I was glad to be able to truthfully say that I hadn’t. Finding no common ground where he sought it, surely he would leave off and find some way to occupy himself that did not involve me.

“Oh, you have to read it,” my heart sank and he ploughed on, “it’s really quite outrageous...” And he proceeded to dictate, with extensive commentary, the article to which he’d made reference. His voice, like a buzzing fly in a quiet room, demanded complete attention. I couldn’t look away. For some reason I felt as if I owed him the time and attention he was taking, even though I knew that I didn’t.

There was something hypnotic about his voice, it oscillated in its volume, pitch and rapidity. Even when I stopped listening to the words, I couldn’t drag my focus away from him. There was scarcely a pause in which I could interrupt and excuse myself from this one-sided ‘conversation’.

I began to watch his face rather than listen to his words. For ten minutes, I watched his unattractive head wag back and forth; I watched his oversized, thin-lipped mouth working. I watched his face until I was aware of little else, the rest of my world became blurred. He began to look inhuman; his features lost their definition until I saw only a mass of seething, pulsating flesh. I noticed that his eyes did not stand still. The dead, yellowish orbs flew wildly around the room and touched every part of my body except for my own eyes. Why wouldn’t he look into my eyes? His face was now the only thing I saw at all. It seemed to begin to grow, filling my field of vision. I could not look away, in fact, I didn’t know if there was anything else to look at anymore.

Suddenly, I became aware of another sensation. The couch seemed to be falling from beneath me. The world came back and I realised he had just moved to sit right beside me. His added weight on my couch had broken me out of my trance.

“I have to go now,” I interrupted, and rapidly collected my books and my purse. I walked towards the door, pretending not to hear him ask for my name.

I felt abused.

2: *Me*

I looked up from my crossword puzzle just in time to see him enter the coffee-shop. *Uh-oh*, I thought, grinning slightly, *here we go again*. I found his behaviour fascinating. It was a pattern that he repeats absolutely every time he's in here, and he was about to do it again.

He paid for his coffee and walked to the centre of the room. He paused abruptly, and holding his cup in one hand, began to search the room with staring, buggy, little eyes. The Inter-sexual Social Predator (that's what I call him) was choosing his prey. When he had come in, I'd made my own brief, ocular survey of the shop's female population and I already knew which one he'd choose. Sure enough, he once again proved to be pathetically predictable. He made his way directly towards a young woman sitting alone in a small group of couches. (They're always sitting alone; he wants there to be no distractions from himself.) *At least he seems to have discerning taste*, I thought. This girl was a bookish brunette, dressed well, and probably quite striking when the glasses come off and the hair is let down.

I was sitting too far away to hear, but as I watched him stretch and shift about in his seat I knew he must have been making quite a racket. I looked on as his prey's expression changed from placid to annoyed to exasperated as she made a heroic effort to focus on her reading throughout this bombardment of noise. I silently applauded her tenacity, but I knew she was doomed.

This is it, I thought, *he's going to say something*. And he did. As he spoke and I looked on, I prayed that she would spare herself and make no reply. But no, like all the other girls, this one was too polite to ignore him. I mournfully returned to my crossword puzzle, giving the innocent up for lost.

3: *He*

I was at the top of my game when I entered the coffee-shop. *The ladies had better watch out*.

Janitor

Dead, sterile scent of clean floors
Curls into numbed nostrils.
Ghost-children play in corridors
Making fluorescent light flicker and buzz.
Echoes of their laughter bounce
Off cold, latex-covered brick.

Last Car in the Caravan

enormous red shoes
hang
from a peg on the door, their laces
tied
together in a double knot.
an orange yarn wig is
tossed
casually over a wooden bust
like a dream
cast
aside.

red rubber noses
and row upon row of

roses that
squirt
seltzer all
lie
on a shelf,
each with a cheap laugh loosely
attached.
a rainbow of handkerchiefs
smelling
strongly of stale popcorn
and sickly-sweet candy floss
strewn
wildly across the floor.
none of them
held
an answer.
the stench of old, cracking grease paint
fills
the tiny caravan,
but it doesn't
register,
his senses are
numbed.

there is a note on the desk, carefully
crafted,
held
in place by an oversized novelty comb.
it
sits
among relics from his past.
a whoopee cushion,
fake blood, plastic vomit
and an exploding cigar.

remnants of long
forgotten
memories.
none of them
matter
any more.

a tear
rolls
down his cheek as he
reaches
for his newest prop and
spins
the chamber for one last jest.
but no one else
laughs
or
cries.
it's lonely
when the laughter dies.

The Bleak Knight

 *For Emma, my gilded woman, clad in light.*

On a wasted field, first light broke upon the sere, arid ground. A man, one man, alone, stood on that field facing the dawn. But his shadow did not darken the dry earth, for another shadow consumed his own, a great darkness that eclipsed the rising sun. That shadow belonged to a fearsome dragon. The dragon roared and bellowed and his fiery breath burned the very air the man took into his own lungs. The dragon glared at the man from yellow, lantern eyes and pawed at the dusty ground with huge, razor sharp talons. His beating wings lifted and hurled the dust of the ground at the man. The man lifted his arm to shield his eyes, but he did not turn away. Though he had no armour, though he had no weapon of any kind, the man did not turn away. Though he was naked and afraid, though he shook from his weak knees to his trembling fingertips, he did not turn to flee. But the man was not brave. In fact, he was a coward. Driven to bleakness by his own

cowardice, his only thought was to die in shame, to let the dragon consume him.

With a final, smoky snort, the dragon's yellow eyes narrowed to slits. For one last moment those eyes watched the man, puzzled; he had expected a fight, or a chase at least. In an instant he reared up on his hind legs, spreading his enormous wings out in their full, furious glory. A roar of wind blew past the man as the dragon filled his chest with air, air that would come back out as flame to cook the man alive. The man turned away, unable to face even the death that he sought. And there, in the distance, on the horizon, something glinted in the light of the rising sun. Something that even the dragon's shadow did not devour. Time stopped. Something new had risen in the heart of the man. Whatever glimmered on the horizon was still far away, yet it drove hope into his bleeding soul; hope and the possibility of a purpose. The man stopped trembling, he was vaguely aware that the searing heat he should have been feeling never came. Scarcely daring to look away from the point of light, he glanced back at the rearing dragon, frozen in time, and he began to run. When hope fills a man, it leaves little room for thoughts of death.

The man ran and ran, across the barren land, feet pounding, legs pumping, lungs burning. He ran until the glimmering became a shining. He ran until the shining became a glaring. And finally, the glaring became a blazing and he ran right on, straight through it, never daring to stray to one side or the other. As he passed through the blaze of light he slowed instantly, as if caught in gelatine air. The tiredness and pain from the run was washed away as he bathed in the light of the blaze. New feelings began to fill him, happiness, comfort, joy. He basked in them, soaking them up, forgetting all about the dragon and the field.

Then, from the folds of the light a form emerged, stepping through it as if through a series of sheer silk curtains. The man stared in wonderment. What new thing was this that the divine light brought him? The form resolved into a gilded woman. A woman with hair of spun gold and eyes that shone like polished emeralds set in silver. He drank in the sight of her. He had never seen anything so beautiful. She laughed and twirled, her lightwrought gown trailing after her, she delighted in being so admired. She looked into the man's eyes and held his gaze. He knew she was peering deep into his soul. She delved into the very depths of him, past all the happiness and joy, past even the hope, and found the bleakness at his centre. She frowned, for she knew that his happiness was empty, a shell

around his true heart. A single tear formed in her emerald eye, and rolled down her cheek. She retreated back into the folds of light, never taking her eyes from the eyes of the man. He called out to her, but she did not answer.

And there was the man, in a paradise of silken light, alone with his own sour heart. He remembered the dragon now, and the field. The thought of them filled his mind with hatred. They were the reason the woman had left him. But he was naked and alone, powerless. The man began to weep silently.

A sound reached the man's ears, a soft voice singing. It became louder and more beautiful moment by moment. The song was a battle hymn, but the singer was no warrior. Out of the folds of light, the woman emerged again, the song ringing from her lips. She carried a bundle in her arms, which she laid before the man. She gestured toward the bundle and he knelt to unwrap it. The wrapping was a cloak, to clothe him. Inside were three things. The first was a shield, the second a sword, and the last was a small pouch. He opened the pouch and poured out its contents into his hand. Tiny seeds. He looked up at the woman as she placed the cloak on his shoulders. She gently took his hands and guided the seeds back in the pouch. She placed the shield into his hands and smiled at him. She picked up the sword and kissed the blade, then touched it to his shoulders, one by one. He took the sword from her and kissed it where her lips had been. She motioned for him to rise, and pointed the way back to the field.

And so the knight marched out of the blaze and back to the ruined field, back to the dragon. But this time he did not expect to be consumed. This time he meant to slay his dragon. And in the soil moistened by the dragon's blood, he would plant a garden, and invite the gilded woman in.

🐉 end 🐉

Transit

Every morning the same thing happens.
I move from A to B,
Always taking the same route;
It never changes.
Most of us maintain a pattern.
I share mine with a few;
Fellow creatures of habit.
Slaves to wretched regimens.
We move through the motions of travel
In a next to mindless state,
Following a prescription issued by a job
Or an institute of learning.
There is nothing new under the sun.
There is nothing new under the sun.

Door. Key. Lock. Foot path. Sidewalk. Bus stop.
Wait.
I look at my watch without seeing the time.
I stare down the road and look
For the great, rolling behemoth
Dressed all in red and white,
Proud to be Canadian.
It arrives.
Doors. Step. Pocket. Token. White line.
Sardine.
I join the game, sitting or standing.
I look at you, you look at me.
She ignores both of us.
He's on the phone. Loudly. Miscreant.
I read an advert.
I've read it a thousand times before
But I still don't know what it says.
Stop. Go. Stop. Go. Stop. Go.
Scream. Scream. Scream.
But I don't scream.
No one does.
There is no expression in transit.
Only a few cowardly souls
Pretend to be sour and jaded.
If you smile on the bus, there is something wrong with you.
Or you just want a lay. Whichever.
It doesn't matter; either way you're avoided.
Station. Step down. Doors. Stairs. Escalator. Platform.
Wait.
I fail to notice, along with everyone else,
The bright, well maintained signs.
Signs for safety. Signs to tell you what to do.
Ignored. We've been minding that gap for years
And it hasn't made any difference.
I don't mind, you don't mind, nobody minds.

Train. Doors. What gap?
 Sardine.
 Halftime is over. We start the game again.
 Who's winning? Who knows?
 I don't even think anyone's keeping score.
 What does it matter?
 Both teams lose in the end.
 I forfeit and read a book.
 Stop. Go. Stop. Go. Pause.
 New conductor. This takes some time.
 Inconsiderate, to have a shift change while I'm riding.
 New driver seems to think we're all strapped in.
 Brake. Everyone rock forward.
 Stop. Everyone slam back.
 A hot, seething mosh-pit on three rails.
 The bruises will show up in the morning.
 Screw the book.
 I can't read like that.
 I peevishly look at all the peevish people in the car
 And contemplate what it would feel like to touch the third rail.
 Stop. Mine. Doors. Stairs. Escalator. Turnstile. Street.
 B.
 I do it every morning, and I can't change.
 I long for a rescuer,
 But it is a foolish fancy.
 No one is coming in here from out there.
 No one is coming to save me.
 I'll have to break myself out.
 And we all know that I can't.
 So, think of me, in transit,
 Unable to make a transition.
 Mind the gap.
 I buy my clothes from The Gap,
 And nobody seems to mind.



Basil Munroe Godevenos has lived his whole life in the Greater Toronto Area, where he developed a penchant for Speculative Fiction, pan-Asian cuisine and video games. He has an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Toronto.

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